## MINUTES OF THE HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

CITY OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

Lower Level – Room 41, City Hall/Court House, 15 West Kellogg Boulevard **June 23, 2011** 

Present: Richard Dana, Robert Ferguson, Jennifer Haskamp, Renee Hutter, Rich Laffin, John

Manning, Diane Trout-Oertel, Mark Thomas

**Absent:** Matt Hill (excused), David Riehle (excused), Matt Mazanec (excused), Steve Trimble

(unexcused)

Staff Present: Amy Spong, Christine Boulware, Becky Willging

## **BUSINESS MEETING**

I. CALL TO ORDER: 5:07 by Chair Manning

- **II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:** Rich Laffin motioned to approve the agenda, Richard Dana seconded the motion; the motion passed 7-0.
- III. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: None stated.
- IV. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS: Chair Manning stated he and Commissioner Laffin met with Staff at the executive committee and discussed how they would like to see some consideration of a moratorium on demolition along central corridor involving properties found eligible for national register designation.
- V. STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS: Staff indicated that there have been 50 permit reviews in June thus far, and they are speaking with applicants about the July public hearing and pre-application reviews in August. The number of reviews has increased since last year.

## VI. PERMIT REVIEW/PUBLIC HEARING:

**A. 260 Fifth Street East, Lowertown Historic District,** by Diane Nordquist, City of Saint Paul - HRA, for permits to install mosaic art panels above the first floor windows at the Wall and Fifth Street facades along with custom exterior light fixtures. **HPC File #11-019** (Spong, 266-6714)

Staff read the report recommending conditional approval. Commissioner Laffin asked if the five photos were representative of what the mosaic art panels will look like. Staff replied, yes. Commissioner Thomas asked if the panel showing the firehouse insignia matched the original. Staff said, yes, it was taken from an historic photograph from MNHS. The owner's representative, Brian Gorecki, approached the Commission to further introduce the project. He said that this is the first public art project going forward in the historic district, and thanked staff for helping guide them through the process.

The artist, Josh Sarantitis, introduced himself and said that he has been working on public art projects for 20 years and in a variety of media types. He said that what is seen on the screen are representation of what the mosaics will look like, and passed around a sample of the glass tiles that will be used. He said that the images are all based on historical images that have a direct connection to the site. He said that the insignia image is from the fire station that was located in that area. He wanted to bring about some sort of contemporary design aesthetic to it even though it's an historical site, so each of them are details but have a balance between the image and the contemporary feel of mosaics. He isn't following the traditional method of using hand-cut tile and laying

them, but instead uses a computer program that allows him to project where the exact tiles and colors will go. He said that the drawings can change at some point, and that they are based on black and white photos, but color was added in layers. He said that if the images are approved, he will get permission from the MNHS to use them. Commissioner Trout-Oertel asked where the image of the bushel of apples came from. Mr. Sarantitis said that they came from an image from the Historical Society and is of the local farmer's market. Staff said that the farmer's market was originally located north of Lowertown, and then moved into Lowertown when the Embassy Suites were built.

Commissioner Dana asked what the proportions where. Mr. Sarantitis said that each panel is 12'6" x 5' tall. Chair Manning asked if the mosaic tiles used in the panels would be the same size as the ones in the sample. Mr. Sarantitis said that they would be the same size, and that each panel would be approximately 150 tiles high by 360 tiles long. Commissioner Hutter asked Mr. Sarantitis how he felt about the staff recommendation to resize the panels, and if he thought it would affect the way they looked. He said he chose that size because it lines up with the windows in the vertical elevation and emphasizes the horizontal and vertical lines. He said they could be a bit smaller, but bigger would be a problem. Commissioner Ferguson said that the staff recommendation was that the height be resized and not the length. Staff stated that the recommendation was made because that the panels are encroaching on the cornice. Mr. Sarantitis said that he thinks the majority of them can be resized without losing the context of the images. Commissioner Ferguson asked how he felt about the mounting. Mr. Sarantitis said that he would prefer that they be recessed with a masonry backing that he can adhere to, and that his recommendation would be to extend the panel to the cornice. David Haaland from Urban Works Architects introduced himself and explained how the panels would be mounted. He said that they would be recessed slightly from the columns. Commissioner Trout-Oertel asked if there was going to be a boarder or frame around the panels. Mr. Sarantitis said that if they decided to do a boarder, he recommends it be done in the glass tile; otherwise it would just meet with the silicone edge at the masonry. Commissioner Trout-Oertel asked if the there would be any finishing on the edge or if the brick would just stick out a little more than the panels. Mr. Sarantitis said that was the plan at this point. He said that they considered installed a metal frame, but they couldn't find one that would last a long time and wouldn't pop the tiles off. He said that to add another material in the frame wouldn't be aesthetically pleasing.

Commissioner Laffin said that three of the images are similar in that they are robust and circular in form and that it might be beneficial to find others that would compliment that theme. He said that it may help to find images that are more legible from the street. He also said that he was concerned that alternating every other spandrel with panels might make it look spotty. Chair Manning asked if the "every-other" pattern is broken on the other elevation, and staff responded that the last bay is recessed. Staff said the panels were going to be narrower than shown in the plans, and that weren't sure how difficult it would be to comply with the recommendation, but wanted to make sure that everyone understood what the condition meant by preserving the top few rows of precast and the cornice. Mr. Sarantitis said that by taking off 30% of the panels instead of extending them to the cornice, you draw more attention to the artwork instead of making it seem like they are part of the architecture. Commissioner Trout-Oertel said that the panel should be reduced an equal amount on both the top and the bottom so it looks like its floating. Commissioner Laffin said that they should fill the whole panel. Commissioners Ferguson and Thomas agreed. Staff said that the conditions go together, so if one goes away, the other should go away. Commissioner Laffin said that it should be set up for

the possibility of additional art installations. Chair Manning asked if staff received anything in writing and Staff replied that they did not.

Chair Manning closed the public hearing and asked for a motion. Commissioner Laffin moved in favor of the staff recommendation with the exception that the mosaic panels not be resized, and instead extend to the underside of the cornice and lintels below them. Commissioner Thomas seconded the motion. Chair Manning said that the findings should be altered in favor in the motion. Staff said that item No. 5 of the findings should be revised. Chair Manning said that the wording in the finding should change from "may impact" to "will not impact." Commissioners Thomas and Laffin agreed. Commissioner Trout-Oertel asked Commissioner Laffin if he had a concern about leaving a possibility for adding public art above the other storefronts in the future. Commissioner Laffin said that the precast panels will be there in the same plane regardless if there is a mosaic panel or not. Commissioner Trout-Oertel asked if there would need to be a break-out panel for the veneer. Commissioner Dana said that the only condition would be that any additional art would be the thickness of the mosaic panel now. Chair Manning said that this would be a discussion if the applicant chose to pursue additional installations in the future. Commissioner Ferguson said that if the motion was to delete the first condition, he didn't understand why the second condition would remain. Commissioner Laffin said that it doesn't need to, because the mosaic panels will be fully integrated into both elevations. Chair Manning said that part of the motion would either be that the first condition is met by the proposal, or they can make it cleaner and remove it. Commissioner Ferguson said that the second condition is also met by the proposal, so they don't need either condition. Chair Manning suggested that they work from what they have. Staff Spong said that the intent for the second condition was that the panels be in place of the veneer, but that is not the intent of the motion as it stands. She suggested that someone provide an amendment to the original motion to make it clearer. Commissioner Ferguson proposed that condition two and the first sentence of condition one be omitted from the original motion. Commissioners Laffin and Thomas agreed with the amendment. The motion was passed 8-0.

- VII. OLD BUSINESS: Staff stated that the design committee needs to find a time to meet with the architects of Lofts at Farmer's Market and Diane Nordquist to view the mock-up panels for the brick.
- VIII. NEW BUSINESS: There was no new business.

IX. ADJOURN: 6:02 P.M. Submitted by: B. Willging